



# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY HEALTH RISKS AMONG RHODE ISLAND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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*Rhode Island Department of Education  
in collaboration with the  
Rhode Island Department of Health*

*December 1999*

This summary highlights selected information on physical activity behaviors which affect health risks among Rhode Island high school students, based on results of Rhode Island's 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The YRBS is an anonymous and voluntary survey conducted in alternate years among randomly selected samples of high school students in each of 46 participating states and territories nationwide. It was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor health-risk behaviors that contribute to the major causes of mortality, disease, injury and other health and social problems among youth and adults in the United States.

During the spring of 1997 the 84-item multiple choice YRBS was administered to 1,528 randomly selected Rhode Island public school students in grades 9 through 12. With a response rate of 60.0%, results of the survey can be considered representative of all Rhode Island public school students in grades 9 through 12.

***For additional information or a more detailed report contact Cynthia Corbridge, RI Department of Education (401) 222-4600 ext. 2106 or Jana Hesser, Ph.D., Office of Health Statistics, RI Department of Health (401) 222-2550.***

## **K** *KEY FINDINGS*

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- ✓ Male students (72%) were more likely than female students (52%), and ninth grade students (68%) were more likely than 12<sup>th</sup> graders (55%), to have participated in vigorous physical activity on three or more days in the preceding week.
- ✓ A greater percentage (42%) of Rhode Island high school students than of high school students nationally (33%) participated in moderate physical activities (bicycling and/or walking for at least 30 minutes on 3 or more days in the prior week). Ninth graders (49%) were more likely than 12<sup>th</sup> graders (34%) to have engaged in such moderate physical activities.
- ✓ 91% of Rhode Island high school students were enrolled in physical education classes during an average school week, compared with 49% nationally; 62% of Rhode Island students were physically active for more than 20 minutes in an average PE class, compared with 39% nationally. However, about one fourth (27%) of students nationally attended PE classes every day during an average school week, compared with 14% of Rhode Island high school students.
- ✓ Male students were more likely than female students to have participated on sports teams during the prior year, whether run by the school (52% vs. 38%) or unaffiliated with the school (47% vs. 33%). Likewise, younger students were more likely than older students to have participated on sports teams during the prior year, whether school run (50% vs. 41%) or unaffiliated with the school (48% vs. 30%).

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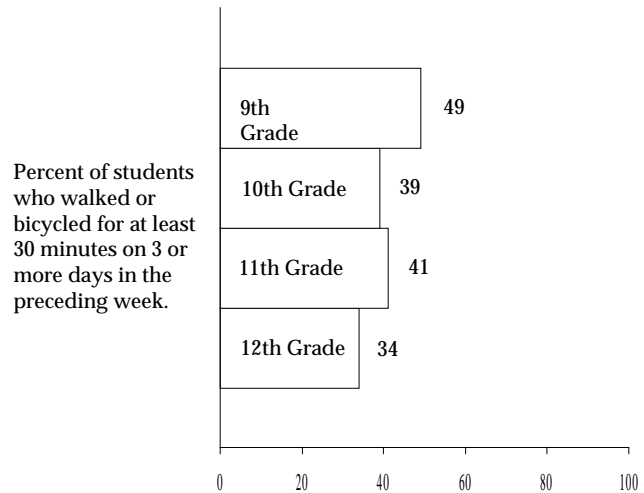
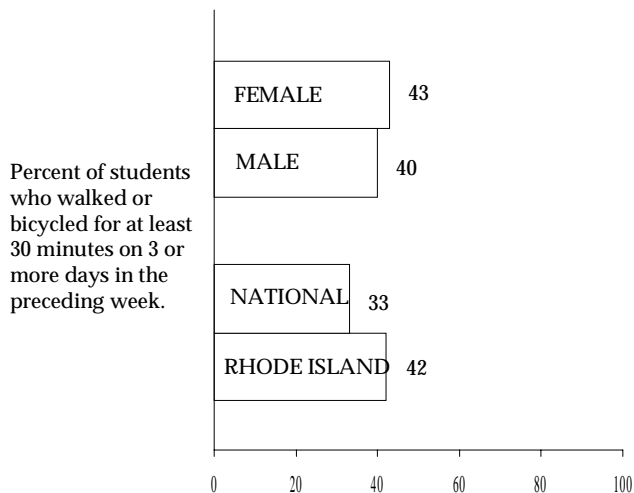
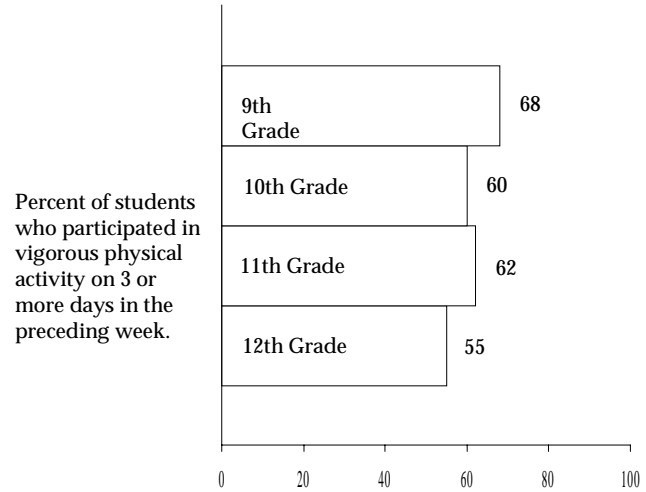
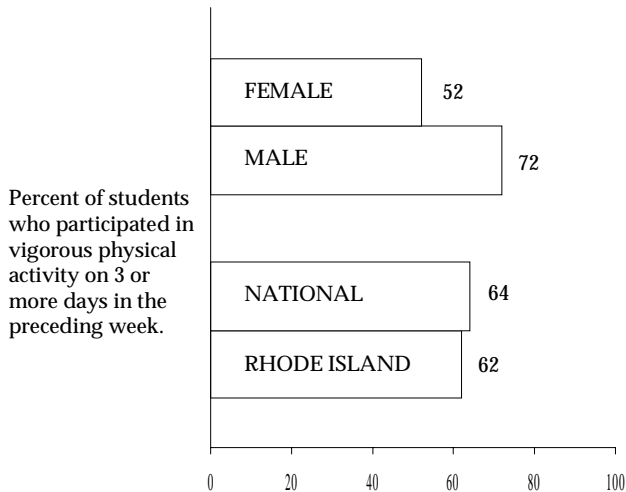
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# Physical Activity

## **Risk Behavior:** Lack of regular physical activity

**Rationale:** Regular physical activity (PA) increases life expectancy and is associated with good mental health and self-esteem. Additionally, regular PA can assist in the prevention and management of coronary heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, and mental health problems. Regular participation in vigorous PA (here defined as those activities which make one sweat and breathe hard) helps to achieve and maintain higher levels of cardiorespiratory fitness and to perform daily tasks more easily. Regular participation in moderate PA provides many of the same health benefits as vigorous PA. However, moderate PA is more likely to be adopted and maintained and is less likely to cause injuries than vigorous PA. Adolescents who participate in moderate PA may be more likely to develop lifetime PA patterns than those who do not. Walking and bicycling are two of the most common types of light to moderate PA among adolescents.

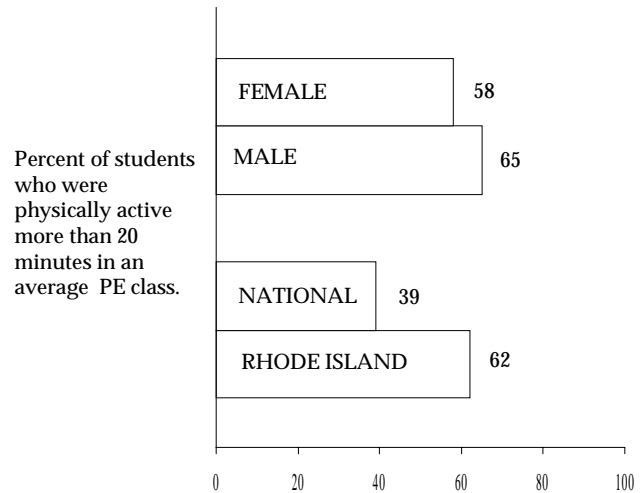
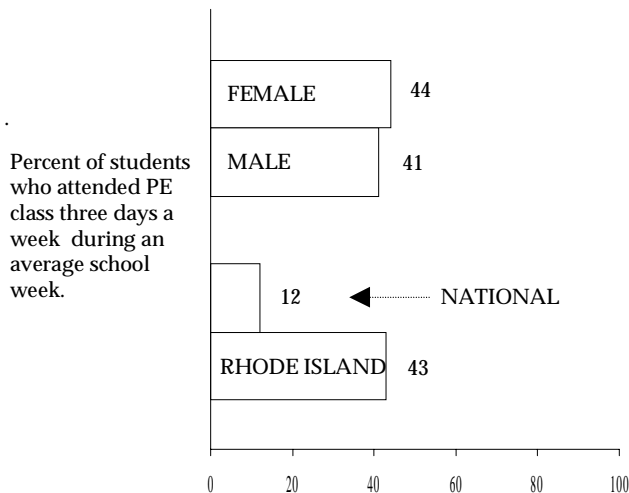
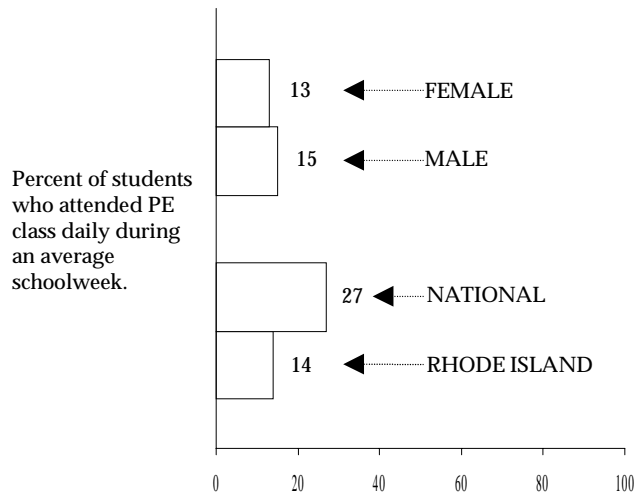
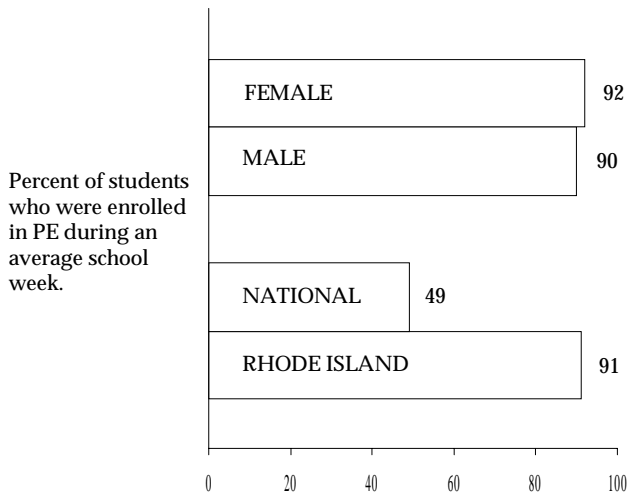


# Physical Activity

## **Risk Behavior:**

Lack of physical activity -- Participation in physical education classes

**Rationale:** Physical education (PE) classes provide an opportunity to ensure that all students have a minimal, regular amount of physical activity. Such classes also help establish lifelong physical activity patterns. Daily physical education, however, is not always offered to all students, often is not required for graduation, and may include only light physical activity. School physical education programs can have a significant positive effect on the health-related fitness of adolescents.



# Physical Activity

**Risk Behavior:** Lack of regular physical activity - Participation on sports teams

**Rationale:** Participation on sports teams is common during adolescence. Most of these teams are part of organized sports sponsored by schools or by other community organizations or groups. Participation on sports teams typically reflects participation in moderate to vigorous physical activity. Participation on sports teams does not appear, however, to contribute substantially to the development of lifelong physical activity patterns. Sports participation also places adolescents at increased risk of injury.

